

100 Words M - R

met•a•mor•pho•sis (mĕt'ə-môr'fə-sis) *n.*, *pl.* **-ses** (-sĕz') **1.** A transformation, as by magic or sorcery. **2.** A marked change in appearance, character, condition, or function. **3.** *Biology* Change in the form and often habits of an animal during normal development after the embryonic stage. **4.** *Pathology* A usu. degenerative change in the structure of a particular body tissue. [Lat. *metamorphōsis* < Gk. < *metamorphoun*, to transform : *meta-*, meta- + *morphē*, form.]

mi•to•sis (mī-tō'sis) *n.*, *pl.* **-ses** (-sĕz') *Biology* **1.** The process in cell division by which the nucleus divides, normally resulting in two new nuclei, each of which contains a complete copy of the parental chromosomes. **2.** The entire process of cell division including division of the nucleus and the cytoplasm. [Gk. *mitos*, warp thread + *-osis*.] —**mi•tot'ic** (-tōt'ik) *adj.* —**mi•tot'i•cal•ly** *adv.*

moi•e•ty (moi'i-tē) *n.*, *pl.* **-ties** **1.** A half. **2.** A part, portion, or share. **3.** Either of two kinship groups based on unilateral descent that together make up a tribe or society. [ME *moite* < OFr. *meitiet*, *moitie* < LLat. *mediētās* < Lat., middle < *medius*, middle. See **medhyo-** in App.]

nan•o•tech•nol•o•gy (năn'ə-tĕk-nŏl'ə-jē) *n.* The science and technology of building electronic circuits and devices from individual atoms and molecules. —**nan'•o•tech•nol'•o•gist** *n.*

ni•hil•ism (nī'ə-līz'əm, nĕl'-) *n.* **1.** *Philosophy* **a.** An extreme form of skepticism that denies all existence. **b.** A doctrine holding that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. **2.** Rejection of all distinctions in moral or religious value and a willingness to repudiate all previous theories of morality or religious belief. **3.** The belief that destruction of existing political or social institutions is necessary for future improvement. **4.** also **Nihilism** A movement of mid 19th-century Russia that believed in radical societal and governmental change through terrorism and assassination. **5.** *Psychology* A delusion that the world or one's mind, body, or self does not exist. [Lat. *nihil*, nothing; see **ne** in App. + *-ism*.] —**ni'hil•ist** *n.* —**ni'hil•is'tic** *adj.* —**ni'hil•is'ti•cal•ly** *adv.*

no•men•cla•ture (nŏ'mən-klā'chər, nŏ-mĕn'klə-) *n.* **1.** A system of names used in an art or science. **2.** The procedure of assigning names to organisms listed in a taxonomic classification. [Lat. *nōmenclātūra* < *nōmenclātor*, nomenclator. See **NOMENCLATOR**.]

non•sec•tar•i•an (nŏn'sĕk-tār'ē-ən) *adj.* Not limited to or associated with a particular religious denomination. —**non'sec•tar'i•an•ism** *n.*

no•ta•rize (nŏ'tə-rīz') *tr.v.* **-rized, -riz•ing, -riz•es** To certify or attest to (the validity of a signature on a document, for example) as a notary public. —**no'ta•ri•za'tion** (-rī-zā'shən) *n.*

ob•se•qui•ous (ŏb-sĕ'kwē-əs, əb-) *adj.* Full of or exhibiting servile compliance; fawning. [ME < Lat. *obsequiōsus* < *obsequium*, compliance < *obsequi*, to comply : *ob-*, to; see **OB-** + *sequi*, to follow; see **sek**^{w-1} in App.] —**ob•se•qui•ous•ly** *adv.* —**ob•se•qui•ous•ness** *n.*

ol•i•gar•chy (ŏl'i-gär'kē, ŏl'i-) *n.*, *pl.* **-chies** **1a.** Government by a few, esp. by a small faction of persons or families. **b.** Those making up such a government. **2.** A state governed by an oligarchy. —**ol'i•gar•chic, ol'i•gar•chi•cal** *adj.*

om•nip•o•tent (ŏm-nīp'ə-tənt) *adj.* Having unlimited or universal power, authority, or force. See Usage Note at **infinite**. ♦ *n.* **1.** One who is omnipotent. **2.** **Omnipotent** God. Used with *the*. [ME < OFr. < Lat. *omnipotēns*, *omnipotent-* : *omni-*, omni- + *potēns*, pr. part. of *posse*, to be able; see **poti-** in App.] —**om•nip'o•tence, om•nip'o•ten•cy** *n.* —**om•nip'o•tent•ly** *adv.*

or•thog•ra•phy (ŏr-thŏg'rə-fē) *n.*, *pl.* **-phies** **1.** The art or study of standard spelling. **2.** The aspect of language study concerned with letters and spelling. **3.** A method of representing a language or the sounds of language by written symbols; spelling. —**or•thog'ra•pher, or•thog'ra•phist** *n.*

ox•i•dize (ŏk'sī-dīz') *v.* **-dized, -diz•ing, -diz•es** —*tr.* **1.** To combine with oxygen; make into an oxide. **2.** To increase the positive charge or valence of (an element) by removing electrons. **3.** To coat with oxide. —*intr.* To become oxidized. —**ox'i•diz'a•ble** *adj.* —**ox'i•di•za'tion** (-dī-zā'shən) *n.*

pa•rab•o•la (pə-răb'ə-lə) *n.* A plane curve formed by the intersection of a right circular cone and a plane parallel to an element of the cone or by the locus of points equidistant from a fixed line and a fixed point not on the line. [NLat. < Gk. *parabolē*, comparison, application, parabola (< the relationship between the line joining the vertices of a conic and the line through its focus and parallel to its directrix) < *paraballein*, to compare. See **PARABLE**.]

par•a•digm (păr'ə-dīm', -dīm') *n.* **1.** One that serves as pattern or model. **2.** A set or list of all the inflectional forms of a word or of one of its grammatical categories. **3.** A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, esp. in an intellectual discipline. [ME, example < LLat. *paradigma* < Gk. *paradeigma* < *paradeiknunai*, to compare : *para-*, alongside; see **PARA-** + *deiknunai*, to show; see **deik-** in App.]

pa•ram•e•ter (pə-rām'i-tər) *n.* **1.** *Mathematics* **a.** A constant in an equation that varies in other equations of the same general form, esp. in the equation of a curve or surface that can be varied to represent a family of curves or surfaces. **b.** One of a set of independent variables that express the coordinates of a point. **2a.** One of a set of measurable factors, such as temperature, that define a system and determine its behavior and are varied in an experiment. **b.** A factor that restricts what is possible or what results. **c.** A factor that determines a range of variations; a boundary. **3.** *Statistics* A quantity, such as a mean, that is calculated from data and describes a population. **4.** A distinguishing characteristic or feature. [NLat. *parametrum*, a line through the focus and parallel to the directrix of a conic : Gk. *para-*, beside; see **PARA-** + Gk. *metron*, measure; see **METER**.] —**par'a•met'ric** (păr'ə-mĕt'rĭk), **par'a•met'ri•cal** *adj.* —**par'a•met'ri•cal•ly** *adv.*

pe•cu•ni•ary (pĭ-kyŏō'nĕ-ĕr'ē) *adj.* **1.** Of or relating to money. **2.** Requiring payment of money. [Latin *pecūniarius* < *pecūnia*, wealth. See **peku-** in App.]

pho•to•syn•the•sis (fŏ'tŏ-sĭn'thī-sĭs) *n.* The process by which green plants and certain other organisms synthesize carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and water using light as an energy source and usu. releasing oxygen as a byproduct. —**pho'to•syn'the•size'** (-sīz') *v.* —**pho'to•syn•thet'ic** (-sĭn-thĕt'ik) *adj.* —**pho'to•syn•thet'i•cal•ly** *adv.*

pla•gia•rize (plā'jə-rīz') *v.* **-rized, -riz•ing, -riz•es** —*tr.* **1.** To use and pass off (the ideas or writings of another) as one's own. **2.** To appropriate for use as one's own passages or ideas from (another). —*intr.* To plagiarize the ideas or words of another. —**pla'gia•riz'er** *n.*

plas•ma (plāz'mə) also **plasm** (plāz'əm) *n.* **1a.** The clear yellowish fluid portion of blood, lymph, or intramuscular fluid in which cells are suspended. **b.** Blood plasma. **2. Medicine** Cell-free sterilized blood plasma, used in transfusions. **3.** Protoplasm or cytoplasm. **4.** The fluid portion of milk from which the curd is separated by coagulation; whey. **5. Physics** A highly ionized gas containing nearly equal numbers of positive ions and electrons. [NLat. < LLat., image, figure < Gk. < *plassein*, to mold. See **pela**–² in App.] —**plas•mat'ic** (plāz-māt'ik), **plas'mic** (-mīk) *adj.*

pol•y•mer (pōl'ə-mər) *n.* Any of numerous natural or synthetic compounds of usu. high molecular weight consisting of repeated linked units, each a relatively light and simple molecule. [Gk. *polumerēs*, consisting of many parts : *polu-*, poly- + *meros*, part.]

pre•cip•i•tous (prī-sīp'i-təs) *adj.* **1.** Resembling a precipice; extremely steep. See Syns at **steep**¹. **2.** Having several precipices: *a precipitous bluff*. **3. Usage Problem** Extremely rapid or abrupt; precipitate. See Usage Note at **precipitate**. [Prob. < obsolete *precipitiosus* < Lat. *praecipitium*, precipice. See **PRECIPICE**.] —**pre•cip'i•tous•ly** *adv.* —**pre•cip'i•tous•ness** *n.*

qua•sar (kwā'zār', -sār', -zər, -sər) *n.* An extremely distant celestial object whose power output is thousands of times that of our entire galaxy. [*quas(i-stellar)* + (ST)AR.]

quo•tid•i•an (kwō-tīd'ē-ən) *adj.* **1.** Everyday; commonplace. **2.** Recurring daily. Used esp. of attacks of malaria. [ME *cotidien* < OFr. < Lat. *quōtīdīanus* < *quōtīdīē*, each day : *quot*, how many, as many as; see **kwo**- in App. + *diē*, ablative of *diēs*, day; see **dyeu**- in App.]

re•ca•pit•u•late (rē'kə-pīch'ə-lāt') *v.* **-lat•ed, -lat•ing, -lates** —*tr.* **1.** To repeat in concise form. **2. Biology** To appear to repeat (the evolutionary stages of the species) during the embryonic development of the individual organism. —*intr.* To make a summary. [Lat. *recapitulāre*, *recapitulāt-* : *re-*, *re-* + *capitulum*, main point, heading, dim. of *caput*, *capit-*, head. See **kaput-** in App.] —**re•ca•pit'u•la'tive**, **re•ca•pit'u•la•to'ry** (-lə-tōr'ē, -tōr'ē) *adj.*

re•cip•ro•cal (rī-sīp'rə-kəl) *adj.* **1.** Concerning each of two or more persons or things. **2.** Interchanged, given, or owed to each other: *a reciprocal invitation*. **3.** Performed, experienced, or felt by both sides: *reciprocal respect*. **4.** Interchangeable; complementary: *reciprocal electric outlets*. **5. Grammar** Expressing mutual action or relationship. Used of some verbs and compound pronouns. **6. Mathematics** Of or relating to the reciprocal of a quantity. **7. Physiology** Of or relating to a neuromuscular phenomenon in which the inhibition of one group of muscles accompanies the excitation of another. **8. Genetics** Of or being a pair of crosses in which the male or female parent in one cross is of the same genotype or phenotype as the complementary female or male parent in the other cross. ♦ *n.* **1.** Something that is reciprocal to something else. **2. Mathematics** A number related to another so that when multiplied together their product is 1. For example, the reciprocal of 7 is 1/7. [< Lat. *reciprocus*, alternating. See **per**¹ in App.] —**re•cip'ro•cal'i•ty** (-kāl'i-tē), **re•cip'ro•cal•ness** (-kəl-nīs) *n.* —**re•cip'ro•cal•ly** *adv.*

rep•a•ra•tion (rēp'ə-rā'shən) *n.* **1.** The act or process of repairing or the condition of being repaired. **2.** The act or process of making amends; expiation. **3.** Something done or paid to compensate or make amends. **4. reparations** Compensation or remuneration required from a defeated nation as indemnity for damage or injury during a war. [ME *reparacion* < OFr. < LLat. *reparatiō*, *reparatiōn-*, restoration < Lat. *reparatus*, p. part. of *repāre*, to repair. See **REPAIR**¹.]

res•pi•ra•tion (rēs'pə-rā'shən) *n.* **1a.** The act or process of inhaling and exhaling; breathing. **b.** The act or process by which an organism without lungs, such as a plant, exchanges gases with its environment. **2a.** The oxidative process in living cells by which the chemical energy of organic molecules is released in metabolic steps involving the consumption of oxygen and the liberation of carbon dioxide and water. **b.** Any of various analogous metabolic processes by which certain organisms, such as fungi, obtain energy from organic molecules. —**res'pi•ra'tion•al** *adj.*

###

The American Heritage® College Dictionary, Fourth Edition

By the Editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries

ISBN: 0-618-09848-8 1,664 pages, 7 x 9 1/2

Publication Date: April 22nd, 2002